P. 11*

A most Useful

SERMON

Preached in

LONDON,

Aug. 7. 1680.

By a most worthy and Faithful Minister and Servant of Jesus Christ, most learnedly pressed from *Amos* 8. 11.

Behold the day cometh, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the Land, *not a famine of bread nor a thirst for Water, but of hearing the word of the* Lord, *and they shall wander from Sea to Sea.*

From which Text of Scripture, he learnedly shews the dreadful and deplorable condition of that Kingdom which a famine of the word of the Lord seizes upon; and further shews, That they are the greatest Felons who would rob us of the word of God, and that there is more justice in Hell than is here upon Earth, for in Hell they do not punish the Innocent.

LONDON,
Reprinted for *Joseph Johnson*, 1682.

Amos 8. 11.

Behold the day cometh, ſaith the Lord God, that I will ſend a Famine in the land, not a Famine of Bread, nor a thirſt for Water, but of hearing the Word of the Lord; And they ſhall wander from Sea to Sea.

A Sad Text, and Sad Times too well agree; In the beginning of this Chapter there is a Viſion, in the firſt verſe, *The Lord hath ſhewed me, and behold a Basket of ſummer fruits*; it was a Type or Embleme to ſignifie the ſuddainneſs of *Iſraels* miſery; you know ſummer fruit doth ſoon periſh, winter fruit may be preſerved long, but ſummer fruit doth ſoon fade; ſo the glory of *Iſrael* (like to ſummer fruit) it ſhall ſoon fade away; there is the Viſion.

2. In this Chapter there is a Propheſie in the 3*d* verſe; *The Songs of the Temple ſhall be turned into howling:* a ſad Propheſie, God grant it may not be our Portion; ſongs of the Temple to become howling, where God formerly was ſerved in a pure manner, where there was ſweet ſinging, and melody unto the Lord, now there ſhould be mournful Songs, that joy of the Temple it ſhall be quite ceaſed; A ſad Propheſie!

3. In this Chapter is ſet down the cauſe why the Lord did write ſuch bitter things againſt *Iſrael* his own People, the cauſe was very apparent; it was their ſin, ſin drew Plagues at the heels of it. *Iſrael* grew now weary of God; in the 5*th* ver. of the Chapter: *When will the New Moon be gone, that we may ſell Corn?* they had rather a great deal be trading in their ſhops, than worſhipping in Gods houſe; *when will the New Moon be gone?* when people grow weary of Ordinances, then God grows weary of a People. And

4. There are ſet down the puniſhments for thoſe ſins of *Iſrael*, in the 9*th* verſe of this Chapter, *I will cauſe the Sun to go down at Noon day.* Beloved, this is not meant the natural Eclipſe of the Sun, but

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the meaning is, God would now darken *Iſraels* outward glory and ſplendor; The Sun in Scripture is a Metaphor for Joy; now the going down of the Sun at noon, it is to expreſs great afflictions coming upon this People: when they thought all things ſhould be well, every thing ſhould be well, flouriſhing peace and proſperity kiſſing each other; why now there ſhould be a ſuddain change, God would Eclipſe their outward Comforts; ſaith he, *the Sun ſhall go down at Noon day*: and this was not all, there is a greater puniſhment yet behind, and that is, in the Text I have read. God threatens for their ſins, that there ſhould be a Famine in the Land, not a Famine of Bread, nor a Thriſt for Water, but of hearing the Word of the Lord: As if God ſhould ſay, It was a mercy if only a Famine upon your Bodies, that may pine your Bodies; Oh, but it is a worſe, a Spiritual Famine; a Famine of hearing the Word of the Lord. In which Text, you have theſe four parts.

1. Here is a note of admiration in theſe words, *Behold*; it ſeems to be a wonder, that *Iſrael*, God's People in Covenant, to whom the Oracles of God were committed, that theſe ſhould want the word of the

Lord: Oh what a wonder that ſuch a full breaſt ſhould be drawn dry! that they that had ſuch plenty of Ordinances, ſhould now be cut ſhort, and forced to cry out, *We ſee not our ſigns, there is no more any Prophet among us*, that's the firſt. *Behold*, there is admiration.

2. Here is the judgment threatned in the Text, a Soul Famine.

3. The extention and univerſality of this Famine, why, ſaith God, *it ſhall be a Famine in the Land*, not in a Houſe or Pariſh, but there ſhall be this Soul Famine, it ſhall be univerſal in the Land.

4. Who it is that gives the Famine a Commiſſion, and that is God; *I will ſend a Famine, not of Bread, or Water, but of hearing of the Word of the* Lord.

The words thus opened into theſe ſeveral parts, they yield us theſe four Propoſitions or Doctrines.

1. It doth ſhew, That the word of God is to the Soul as food to the body, for ſtrengthning and refreſhing of it, and that's imply'd in *Job* 23. 12. *I eſteemed the words of thy mouth, as my neceſſary food*; they are my food that my ſoul feeds upon.

2. The ſecond Doctrine is this, When the word of God is deſpiſed or oppoſed,

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it is juſt with the Lord to take it away from a People.

3. The third Doctrine is this, The taking away of the word, is the beginning of a Spiritual famine; and

4. That a Famine of the word, is far worſe than a famine of Bread. A famine I will ſend, ſaith God, not of Bread, nor of Thriſt for Water, but which is worſe, the hearing of the word of the Lord. The famine of the word is worſe than a famine of bread; next to damning of a ſoul, what can be worſe than ſtarving of it; bodily famine is very ſad, much more ſpiritual famine. I ſhall ſpeak a little of bodily famine, that will ſet off the other the more.

Famine is that with-drawing of an neceſſary recruit of Nature. Famine is the with-holding of that Oyl which ſhould be poured into the Lamp of Man's Life; Famine and death is ſuch as you ſee a picture, they both bring the Body into an Anatomy: See a deſcription of a famine in *Jer.* 14. 3. *Their Nobles have ſent their little ones to the water, they came to the pit and found no water, they were aſhamed and confounded, and covered their heads.* It is a very unuſual ſight to ſee Noble Mens Children Tankard-bearers; the Nobles

ſent their Children, but found no water: Famine of the Body is worſe than the Sword is, and that in theſe three reſpects.

1. The Sword cuts off ſuddainly, it makes a quick diſpatch, now famine makes you dye a lingring death, *Lam.* 4. 9. Thoſe pine away, ſtrucken through for want of the fruit of the field; they pine away. Famine will neither let a man live, nor yet ſuffer him to dye. He that is in famine may ſay as St. *Paul*, *In death oft*: how many deaths doth he dye, before he dyes?

2. Famine is univerſal, it reaches more than the Sword, the Sword skips over many; they may be hid from the edge of the Sword, as we read of *Obadiah*, he hid a Thouſand Prophets in a Cave, and ſo eſcaped the edge of the Sword, now a Famine reaches all.

3. Famine makes a man cruel to himſelf, and it is like a Wolf in his breaſt, it makes a man feed upon himſelf; he eats the fleſh of his own arms; it makes a perſon unnatural, *Lam.* 4. 10. Thus the famine of the Body is worſe than the Sword: and now, Beloved, a Famine of the Word is worſe than a Famine of Bread, in theſe two reſpects.

1. A Famine of Bread is only a pining and

and ſtarving of the body; Oh, but the other is ſtarving of the Soul; by how much more precious the Soul is than the Body, ſo much the ſadder the famine of the ſoul muſt needs be; the ſoul is the moſt ſpiritual and reſerved part of man, it's like ſpirits of wine; the ſoul is a divine ſpark that flees upwards towards God. Now if the ſoul be more noble than the body, then the famine of the ſoul muſt needs be more deadly and pernicious than that of the Body, *&c.*

2. The Famine of the body is but temporal, but for a time, and it will quickly have an end, *ſorrow and ſighing ſhall flee away, Ezek.* 35. Oh, but the Famine of the ſoul is eternal. The worm will be ever gnawing the man; the man will be ever dying, but never dead; he will never taſt of one drop of the water of life; it is an eternal famine, he ſhall not have one drop of water to cool his tongue: and thus you ſee the Famine of the word is far more grievous than the Famine of bread: Now the ſadneſs of the Souls famine will further appear in theſe three or four particulars; And I beſeech you obſerve:

1. To have the Famine of the Word of God, it is a dreadful Judgment, becauſe now the very means of Salvation is taken

taken away: The very Bridge is plucked up, that ſhould lead us over to Heaven. *Prov.* 29. 18. *Where there is no Viſion the people periſh.* The *Hebrew* word for *periſh*, hath two ſignifications, either it ſignifies to be made naked, *they ſtrip off their Ornaments and Glory*, or elſe the word *periſh* ſignifies to reject, God rejects ſuch a people, when he takes away the *Viſion* from them. *Where there is no Viſion the people periſh.* But now here is a Queſtion may be asked.

Queſt. You will ſay unto me, But may we not be ſaved without the Word Preached?

Anſ. I will not diſpute what God can do, in an extraordinary way, when people are debarr'd from Ordinances by ſickneſs, or the like, or captivity, the Lord hath promiſed to be a little Sanctuary unto them, *Ezek.* 11. 16. As the people of *Iſrael* in the *Wilderneſs*, when they could not have the ordinary means of tilling, plowing, and ſowing; in this caſe God gave them bread from Heaven, *John* 6. 31. Let me aſſure you, ordinarily God doth not diſtil the Golden Oyl of Salvation, but through the pipes of Ordinances, and therefore you ſhall obſerve in Scripture, that

that Miniſters of the Goſpel, are called *Miniſters of the Spirit*, 2 *Cor.* 3. 8. becauſe the Spirit of God ordinarily makes uſe of the Word, to work grace, and therefore 'tis called the Miniſtry of the Spirit; why this makes the Famine of the Word ſo diſmal, becauſe now, the very means of Salvation is taken away from a people, they lie in their blood.

2. I beſeech you obſerve, A Famine of the Word it is very ſad wherever it comes, becauſe now the Lord turns away his face from a people or a nation. Ordinances are the face of God, they are his ſmiles, face; in the Goſpel, it's called *the face of Chriſt*, 2 *Cor.* 4. 6. Now beloved, when a ſpiritual Famine comes, God turns away his face from us. The Child had rather have his fathers frowns upon him, than that he ſhould turn away his face, to be ſo incenſed againſt him that he will not look upon his Child; and this is ſad, to have God turn away his face from a people; better have a frowning face from God, than no face. The Lord may have love under a wrinckled brow, as the Sun may be under a Cloud; but for God to turn away his face from us, is a ſign he intends to diſinherit us; as *David* prayed, *Lord hide not thy*

thy face from me in Anger, *Pſal.* 120. 2. It is ſad when God hides his face for a time, but worſe when he quite turns away his face, that he will not look upon a people: Oh this makes a ſoul-famine very ſad and dreadful.

3. The Famine of the Word muſt needs be very ſad and diſmal, becauſe if the Word be gone, God has now done ſpeaking to us, he hath no more to ſay. Pray obſerve, It is called in the Text *a famine of hearing*, *of hearing of the Word:* we ſhall hear no more from God; God hath ſomething to ſay to a people as long as his Ordinances are amongſt them, he ſpeaks to them by his Miniſters, they are his mouth, they deliver his Councel. Now as it is a ſad judgment for God to have done ſmiting a people, *Ezek.* 1. 5. *why ſhould you be ſmitten any more?* and ſo for God to leave ſpeaking to a people, *this is a rebellious people*, it is to no purpoſe to uſe any more words, *I will ſpeak no more to them*; it is better for God to ſpeak as if he were angry, than not to ſpeak at all: the priſoner cryes to his Judge for Mercy, mercy, and the Judge will not ſpeak a word no way, but he muſt dye; if God hath done ſpeaking to us in Word, we ſhall hear him

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ſpeaking in another Language, in his wrath. In *Pſal.* 2. 5. *Then ſhall he ſpeak to them in his Wrath, and fiery Language.* If a man will not ſpeak to another, it is a ſign either that he ſlights him, or he doth not think him worth ſpeaking to, or it is a ſign he intends ſome evil againſt him. It was ſad with *Saul* when the Lord had done ſpeaking to him, 1 *Sam.* 28. 6. *The Lord anſwered him neither by Urim, nor his Prophets:* God had done ſpeaking to him, a ſign ſome evil was intended to him; the next he heard ſpeak, it was the Devil, and the news which he brought was ſad, *To morrow thou ſhalt be with me,* 1 *Sam.* 28. 19. Beloved, if God hath once done ſpeaking to a people, why then he hath done hearing too; when he ſhuts his mouth, he alwayes ſtops his ears, though you pray unto him he will not hear; *they cryed to me, and I would not hear*; when the Lord will ſpeak no more to a people, when he ſhuts his mouth, he preſently ſtops his ears: Now is not a ſpiritual famine ſad? God hath now done ſpeaking to a people.

4. The people and the diſpenſers of the Goſpel, they are promiſed by the Lord as great bleſſings to a place, why then to be deprived of ſuch bleſſings, and have a famine

mine of the Word; it muſt needs be a heavy and a diſmal Judgment. Now to ſpeak more diſtinctly to theſe,

1. Conſider what a great bleſſing the Goſpel is; and

2. The Diſpenſers of it, and then you will eaſily conclude what a Judgment it is to be deprived of them.

As for the Goſpel, it is a bleſſing which Crowns a people, the very Engine which God uſes to convert a Soul. It is called in Scripture the word of life, becauſe it infuſes life into the people, it is a two-edged ſword, *Heb.* 4. 12. with one edge it ſtrikes ſin dead, with the other edge it ſtrikes the Soul alive: beſides conſider the great bleſſing of this people in theſe three particulars, and you will ſee what it is to be deprived of it.

1. The Goſpel of Chriſt, it is the Beauty, the Riches, it is the ſtrength of a Kingdom, the moſt ſparkling Jewel in their Crown, the beauty of God ſhines in the Goſpel: Brethren, the Goſpel is the glaſs in which we ſee the unſearchable riches of Gods love to a ſinner. The Goſpel preached gives us the preſence of Chriſt, and Chriſts preſence is the ſpiritual beauty of a Nation; now if there be a famine of the

the Word, then the glory is departed. *England* without the Gospel will be like unto a house, when the rich furniture and hangings are pulled down, the house is naked and deformed; so if the preaching of the Word be Eclipsed, then the Glory of a Kingdom is Entombed, and all places of Honour lye in the dust.

2. The preaching of the Gospel is the riches of a Kingdom, it encreases a Kingdoms treasure and revenue; there are many temporal blessings that come along with the word: it hath been observed that those places have been most fruitful and have been most enriched where the Gospel hath been planted, trading in those parts hath been most quick; it is observable that same place of King *Jehosaphat*, that when he had taken care for a preaching Ministry, and sent his Princes and his Nobles to encourage his Ministers; Oh how rich did his Kingdom grow, they brought him presents of silver, and he waxed exceeding rich, 2 *Chron.* 17. 11. The Gospel it is like the Ark which carries a blessing with it where ever it went: *Hag.* 2. 18. saith God, *Consider, from this day, even from the day that the Lords Temple was laid, from this day will I bless you: Israels* mercies did bear date from

from the Temple building; ſo that the Goſpel is the riches of a Kingdom.

Mark what I ſay to you this day, the ready way to beggar a Kingdom, is to take away the Goſpel: I beſeech you remember, a Famine of Gods word will ſoon bring a Famine of Bread upon a Land.

3. The Goſpel preached is the defence of a Kingdom, it is a Kingdoms ſafety and defence, it is the Fort-Royal of a Land, it is the very lock whereon *Englands* ſtrength lies; what was the ſtrength of *Iſrael*? God was there, there was his word, and there was his Ordinances, that was the Rock where *Iſraels* ſtrength did lye; not brazen Walls but ſilver Trumpets are the beſt defence of our Land. It is ſaid of the *Levites* or Miniſters, that when they came and preached at *Jeruſalem*, 2 *Chron.* 11.17. the Text ſaith, *they ſtrengthened the Kingdom.* It is remarkable in Scripture, they as take away the preaching of the Goſpel, are like thoſe that pull down the Bancks to let in the main Sea, they open a ſluce to let in the wrath of God upon a Kingdom: Thus you ſee the Goſpel is a ſingular bleſſing, and therefore to have a famine of the word, to have the Goſpel go, it muſt needs be a great curſe to a Land.

Again,

Again, as the Goſpel is a great bleſſing, ſo the Diſpenſers, the Miniſters of the word, they are promiſed as great bleſſings to a Land; and therefore to have them removed, and a Soul Famine, it is a heavy judgment: God promiſes his Miniſters as bleſſings to a Nation, *Jer.* 3. 15. *I will give you Paſtors after mine own Heart, that ſhall feed you with knowledge*; and that they are great bleſſings, appears by the title the Scripture gives to them.

1. They are called the Diſpenſers and Stewards of Gods word, they are called Embaſſadours; 2 *Cor.* 5. 20. *We as Embaſſadors of God, beſeech you in Chriſts ſtead to be reconciled*; we come to wo you in Chriſts name, and clear up your Souls to Chriſt, we come to make up the happy match between Chriſt and you, we bring the Kings picture along with us, we ſet before your eyes the Lord Jeſus in his moſt Orient Colours, we ſhow him to you in the beauty of his Perſon, the glory of his Offices, the ſweetneſs of his love; why now, if on a ſuddain God calls home his Embaſſadours, it is a ſign he intends the match ſhall be broken off.

2. They are called Diſpenſers and Stewards of the word of God, they are

called ſtars in Gods hands, *Rev.* 1.20. They are ſtars,

Firſt, For their Light, how glorious is the Goſpel when it is beſpangled and ſet thick with thoſe ſtars.

Secondly, they are ſtars not only for light but for uſe, they are like the ſtar that guided the wiſe men to Jeſus Chriſt; if thoſe ſpiritual ſtars be removed? how ſhall the ſoul know how to ſteer its courſe, they will be like Mariners that are benighted upon Shelves and Rocks: Oh, how many where theſe ſtars are wanting, ſhall to hell in the Dark.

3. They are called Diſpenſers and Stewards of Gods holy Oracles. They are called Phyſitians; *Jer.* 8. 22. *Is there no Balm in Gilead? is there no Phyſitian there?* The ſoul of man is ſubject to more Diſeaſes than the Body, as one Chriſtian is troubled with the Stone of the Heart, another with a dead Palſey, and benumedneſs of Conſcience, now it is the work of Gods Miniſters to find out theſe Diſeaſes, and to apply proper remedies. Beloved, how ſad is it, to have your Phyſician taken away that ſhould heal you, to have a poor ſoul lie all in Agony, in a burning Feavour of Conſcience, and none to ſpeak words in due

due ſeaſon, or drop in Chriſt! Is there no Balm in *Gilead*?

4. God calls his Miniſters his Waterers, 1 *Cor.* 3. 6. *Apollo* was a waterer, now you know if you have a plant ſet in a good ſoil, if it be not watered, it yields no fruit. This City of *London* hath had many *Apollo's* in it, it hath had much watering, you have been watered with the Labours of your Miniſters, and perhaps watered with their Tears too; Oh, but for your ſins, God may command, that there ſhall be no more ſhowers, no more watering; If the Lord ſhould tranſplant his *Apollo's*, and ſee there is more need of watering and planting in foreign parts, how would this work of Grace go backward in us! how would your good affections wither, and be as the ground that is parched and dryed for want of ſhowers! Thus Beloved, you ſee what a great bleſſing it is to have the Goſpel Diſpenſers among you, and therefore you may imagine what a ſpiritual famine is, and to have theſe bleſſings removed: well may *England* weep her eyes out, when theſe are gone that ſhould bring the Viſion to her.

Now my Beloved, if a famine of Gods word be ſo deplorable and dreadful as it is, to have the Bread of life taken away from us, as you may read *Amos* 8. 11. It is called there, *A Famine of the Word of the Lord*, and in 1 *Sam.* 4. it is called there, *The Glory departed*, and in *Matth.* 26. 47. *The Kingdom of Heaven taken away*, The *Salvation of God ſent away*, *Acts* 28. And can there be any thing worſe befall a people, than a Soul Famine, and an Eclipſe of their Spiritual Glory, the ſhutting up of the Kingdom of Heaven, the carrying away of the Salvation of God? what worſe thing can come upon a people? It is a great wonder there ſhould be no deeper a ſenſe of this moſt dreadful of evils, that is moſtly found among Men. Men little underſtand what they do, who either in a way of Merit, or inſtrumentally, procure and bring on theſe Plagues, and few underſtand or are ſenſible what they herein ſuffer; to be an inſtrument in this helliſh work, it's an Office for a Devil; and the ſuffering of ſuch a Plague to them as underſtand it, is an Hell above ground; this Darkneſs is the very ſame for kind, with the darkneſs of Hell, as the light of the Goſpel is the ſame in kind with the

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everlaſting light, as glory under age; ſo is this thick darkneſs, *in ſpecie & in ſimile*, the darkneſs of the pit: Oh what a Hell of wickedneſs doth this world then become; the Devil is then in his Region, is let looſe and rules the world at pleaſure, deceives, devours, deſtroyes Souls without Contradiction, takes them Captive at his will, carries them down by wholeſale to deſtruction. Theſe dark, and diſmal ſeaſons are the Devils Market, where he may vent his helliſh Wares, his Snares and Temptations, his Deceits and Deluſions, and every abominable thing by whole-ſale; there is nothing ſo falſe, ſo vile and abominable, but he can put it off at pleaſure; Adultery, Drunkenneſs, Witchcraft, Sodomy, Buggery, Blaſphemy, Idolatry, Atheiſm, any thing that Sathan hath to offer he will find Cuſtomers enough to receive; and the truth is, the Devil may ſpare his pains: Men then need not a Devil to damn them, they ſhall do it faſt enough of their own Accords.

Oh, it were happy if the Saints were ſo buſie in improving their light, to haſte them Heaven-ward, as ſinners do their darkneſs, to hurry them to Hell.

Oh, the ſad truths that the world affords of this dreadful truth! look into all the dark Corners of the Earth, eſpecially there where there hath been light, and ſee if you find not all this proved to your hand. Can he then be accounted a Chriſtian whoſe heart doth not tremble at the thoughts and the fears of ſuch a ſore judgment? he is both dark and dead indeed, to whom ſuch a Miſt is not as the firſt born of death, or the King of Terrours.

Chriſtians, If ever this ſhould be your Caſe, make not light of it, and take heed, how ſad ſoever it may ſeem in its firſt approach, that no track of time do wear off the ſence of it; I have now done, and come to improve this Propoſition, and proceed to the Application.

Uſe 1. Now my friends, If a famine of the word be ſo dreadful (as you have heard) next to damning of Souls, I know not what worſe then ſtarving of a Soul; if it be ſo diſmal, then what are we to think of thoſe that endeavour by their Counſel and by their Intereſt, what in them lies, to be inſtrumental to bring a famine of the word upon Gods People.

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For my part, I account thoſe, and alwayes ſhall do, the greateſt Felons in the Land, who would rob us of the Word of God; theſe are the Devils Agents, they are his factors; let me aſſure you they will be found fighters againſt God; They are like the *Philiſtians* that ſtopt the Wells, (thoſe that would ſtop the Wells of the Water of Life;) Oh! how would this inhaunce their ſin! What, to be inſtrumental to ſtarve Souls! I will ſay but this, the Miniſters of Jeſus Chriſt they are to warn people of their Sins, they are to tell them if there be any danger, any wrath of God hanging over a Land, they are Watchmen; *Ezek.* 33. 6, 2. *If Watch-men ſee the Sword come, and blow not the Trumpet, and the People be not warned; their blood I will require at the Watch-mens hands.* Now Brethren, I appeal to you; We Watch-men muſt warn the people. Oh how will they be able to anſwer to God at the great day, that ſhall take a Miniſter off from his Spiritual Watch, that ſhall hinder him from warning the People; Surely the blood of Souls muſt needs lie at thoſe mens doors; that is the Firſt.

Use 2. It is of Exhortation; if a Gospel Famine be so dreadful as you have heard, as good almost be in hell; why then let me exhort you this day to some duty.

1. Let us labour with all laboriousness to prevent the removal of the Gospel from us, as we would endeavour to remove the Sword, the Fire, the Plague, so let us labour to prevent the removal of the Gospel from us: Oh a Gospel Famine is the most dismal! and the more let my words prevail with you, because there is so much fear (if God prevent not) of the Gospel departing from us. I might shew you that there is a Soul Famine in many parts of this Land already, and there are many sad signs, the Lord is about to bring this Spiritual Famine upon this Land. I shall shew you the sad symptoms of the Gospel going from *England*, there are (four gray hairs) four sad signs of the Gospel departing, which the Lord prevent.

1. First of all, that great contempt which is thrown upon the Gospel and professors of it; do we think that God is tied to

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England more than to another Nation? do we think the Lord will continue his mercy to a people that deſpiſe his mercy? is he bound to do that? is not the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus this day ſlighted and perſecuted? the *Gergeſens*, they were more mannerly, they beſeeched Chriſt to *depart out of their Coaſts*, *Mat.* 8. 34. But we have many among us, they do not beſeech Chriſt, they would drive him out by force, though nothing but Honey drops from the Lips of the Goſpel, it brings Salvation to a People, yet how is it oppoſed at this day? pray obſerve, I confeſs the Goſpel of Chriſt, it is not ſuited to mens carnal intereſt or appetite, the Goſpel doth not tell them of Fields and Vineyards it hath to beſtow upon them, the Goſpel of Chriſt doth not propheſie of Wine and ſtrong Drink, then the Drunkard would gladly receive the Goſpel; but it is a holy Goſpel, it beats down mens luſts, it proclaims peace to them upon no other tearms, but their proclaiming Warre againſt Sin, and therefore the Goſpel is hated and contemned, and ſurely this contempt of Chriſt and his Goſpel, it is a ſad fore-

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runner of the removal of the Goſpel: Mark what I ſay, a deſpiſed Goſpel will ſoon be a departing Goſpel; will any man ſtay long in a place where he is not welcome? If God ſees that he and his Goſpel are not welcome, he will ſoon take his leave and be gone from them: *Hoſ.* 2. 12. *Woe, woe to them when I depart from them.* Well, that is the firſt ſad ſymptom of the Goſpel departing.

Secondly, Another ſign of the Goſpel going, it is the general Barrenneſs of people under the preaching of the Goſpel; indeed it is to be hoped that ſome are fruitful, but the barren branches are more than the fruitful; *Leah* did comfort her ſelf for her fruitfulneſs that now her Huſband would love her, *Gen.* 29. 34. *She was fruitful, therefore her Husband would love her.* May not we on the contrary fear God will not love us becauſe we are unfruitful? It is a ſad ſign, when in the Weekly bill we ſee more every Week die than are born; Oh! is it not ſo in a Spiritual ſence? we hear of many people that die Apoſtates, but how few are born to God! We hear of many barren Fig-trees that Chriſt curſed, but where

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are the fruitful Vines? if once that Gospel, and people which was as the Garden of God, shall become barren, it is a sign the Lord will bestow no more cost, but will pull up the hedge, and lay his Vineyard waste; that is the second Symptom.

Thirdly, Another sad sign of the Gospel going from us, which the Lord prevent, it is the Animosities and bitter divisions of Gods own people; the Devil danceth at discords, it is a sad sight not only to see Christs Coat rent, but to see his Body rent, his mystical Body. I have often seen, and it is usual, the Wolf to worry the Lamb, but it is unnatural to see one Lamb worrying another: Christians, they should be ready to dye one for another, and they can hardly live one by another: Those that write concerning the Bee, observe, when the Bees strive and mutiny together, it is a sign that the master Bee is about to leave the Hive; and when Gods people strive by discords and contentions, Oh, it is a sign God is going from the Nation, he is about to leave the Hive. If that Servants cannot agree,

agree, they will fall out, why the Maſter will take away the light from them, I wiſh it be not ſo here. My beloved, do not we all hope for one Heaven? Oh why ſhould there not be one Heart among us? how unſeaſonable are contentions among Gods people, now when the Popiſh adverſary is ſo near to us, he is at the door. It is a very bad time for Mariners to divide and fall out when the Enemy is boring a hole at the bottom of the ſhip; is it not ſo now? ſurely it is a ſad ſign of the Goſpel going from us; the Lord will not let his Goſpel dwell in ſuch a houſe as is all on fire.

Fourthly, Another ſad ſign of the Goſpel going from us and a Spiritual Famine, it is this; When the People of God loſe their firſt love, and decline in their affections towards Jeſus Chriſt, *Rev.* 2. 4. *I have ſomewhat againſt thee, becauſe thou haſt left thy firſt love*; when Chriſtians have a Chilneſs and a Deadneſs grow upon them, they have not the love to the word of God as they had, they have not that brokenneſs of Heart for

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ſin, they have not that zeal for truth, they have not that ſimpathie for the miſery of *Sion*; they are now in a declining ſtate, *they have left their firſt love*, and this is a fatal ſign of Gods departing from the Nation; Loſt thy firſt love, it will not be amiſs to enquire whence this loſs of our firſt love ariſeth; this Spiritual Conſumption (as I may ſo call it,) whence does this loſs of our love ariſe? I conceive it ariſeth from theſe four Cauſes.

Firſt, Perhaps there is ſome ſin ſecretly indulged, ſome ſin that your Heart ſets brooding upon: now ſin is pernicious to Grace; it is like the blow at the Root of the Tree, that cauſeth the Tree to wither; as if a man takes but a ſmall quantity of poyſon, why this will hurt his vitals, it will waſte is ſpirit; look upon *David*, he had been taking of poiſon, he was tampering with ſin, and he found a decay in his holineſs; he was like one in an Apoplexie, he had not that lively acting of Grace as formerly he had, he loſt his firſt love.

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Secondly, The loſs of our firſt love, it may ariſe from the neglecting of the Ordinances, the means of Grace; you know Abſtinaſie from food will quickly make the Body Conſumptive, it will ſoon bring a Conſumption; ſo when People either through Pride or through Melancholly leave off Praying, leave off Sacraments, they have abſtinaſie from their Spiritual food, no wonder if they find a declining in their affections; Gods Ordinances they are the fuel for our Graces, if you take away the fuel, no wonder you begin to abate, and you loſe your firſt Love.

Thirdly, The loſs of our firſt love ariſeth, and I pray obſerve it, it riſeth from a formal uſe of holy things; though perhaps we do keep up duty, yet God knows we do not keep up fervency in duty, *Rom.* 12. 11. *Fervent in ſpirit ſerving the Lord.* Oh, when once Chriſtians grow into dull formality, pray as if they prayed not, their hearts are not in the duty, they do not put fire to the incenſe, they grow Drowſie in Prayer; you know the wiſe Virgins they ſlumbered, *Matth.* 25.

Thus

Thus by degrees you loſe your firſt love, though you be not quite dead in ſin, yet you are dead in duty.

Fourthly, The loſs of your firſt love, ariſeth from a ſpiritual ſloath; Chriſtians do not exerciſe themſelves to gôdlineſs, and then there follows a decay in godlineſs; why, you know your experience tells you, there is nothing in the world ſooner brings a mans body into a Conſumption than want of exerciſe, becauſe the ill humors are not purg'd away, and natural heat exerciſed, want of exerciſe kills. My brethren, he that will not uſe grace, he will be ſure to loſe grace; Chriſtians they do not exerciſe their faith, they do not buſie themſelves about Heaven, they do not trade their Talent for Gods glory as they ſhould; they live in houſes together, but they do no good together, they do not exerciſe their grace; and hence they fall into decay of grace before they are aware, and loſe their firſt love; and what follows? the loſs of your firſt love ſadly preſages the loſs of the Goſpel of Chriſt; for this very ſin, in the ſecond of the *Revelations* and the

fourth

fourth *verſe*, they had their golden Candleſtick removed from them: Therefore you ſee, Brethren, what need there is to labour to prevent the ſpiritual Famine, and a loſs of the Goſpel, becauſe there is ſuch a fear of the Goſpel departing from you; you have ſeen it evidently proved before your eyes.

But here is a queſtion; Now you will ſay unto me, we cannot deny but there is a fear of the removal of the Goſpel, and of a famine of the Word; but how ſhall we do to prevent this Soul Famine? Now to this I anſwer, do theſe three or four things to prevent the Goſpel going away.

Firſt, Take heed of thoſe ſins which will ſurely bring a Famine of Gods Word, there are ſome ſins which we muſt endeavour to prevent, that will bring a Famine of the Word, there are ſeveral of theſe ſins ſet down in this Chapter, *Amos* 8. Pray obſerve them, I will mention ſome of them.

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The first sin the Prophet does set down, is Oppression; *Amos* 8. 4. *Hear this, Oh you that Swallow up the needy.* Those *Jawes* they were like the Fishes of the Sea, the greater devour the lesser; For this sin of Oppression God threatens a Famine of the Word; and is not this sin to be found among us, Oppression? I appeal to any one that hath his Reason left. Does not one Man now become a Wolf to another? does not he tear from him the Golden Fleece? I dare be bold to say, there is more Justice to be found in Hell than among men upon Earth; for in Hell no Innocent Person is oppress: that is one sin.

Secondly, Another sinne the Prophet sets down, that is the cause of this Spiritual Famine; it was Weariness of Gods Ordinances, *Amos* the 5*th*, and 8*th Verse. When will your New Moons be gone, that we may sell Corn, and the Sabbath that we may set forth Wheat?* Verse 6. For this sinne I will bring a Famine of the Word; are you weary of me? They were more for Trading than they were for worship-

ping; The Lord hath fed us of this City with the fineſt of the Wheat, the Bread of Life, he hath given us the very Cream of his Ordinances, but when we have been fed to the full, have not we begun to ſurfeit? have we not ſaid, When will the Sabbath be gone, what a wearineſs is it? Truely when we have loſt our Stomach, it is moſt juſt with God to take away our Food; If a Mans Commodities bear a better price in one place than in another, he will remove his Market; the Goſpel is grown a Cheap Commodity, it bears but a low price; now Men are weary of it: and may not we fear God will remove his Market; he will tranſplant his Word into Foreign parts? Surely if we begin to ſay, What a wearineſs is it? if our mercies be our burthens, God can ſoon eaſe us of this burthen; this is a ſinne brings a Famine of the Word, when we are weary of the Ordinances; and hath not this ſinne cauſed a Famine of the Word already in many parts of this Land? There is none knows how to ſpeak to their Spiritual Caſe, that can feed them with

the Bread of Life, that can divide the Word aright; in many parts of the Land it is ſo, they have Huſks given to them inſtead of Food, and Muſick inſtead of Manna.

Thirdly, Another ſin that brings a Soul Famine, is this Couzening in mens Dealing; *Verſe* 5. *Making the Epha ſmall:* the Epha it was the Kings Meaſure, *Verſe* 7. In ſelling they made the Epha ſmall, the meaning is, they gave but ſcanty Meaſure; they made the Epha ſmall; and ſaith God, You ſell the refuſe of the Wheat, that is meer Cheating; they pick out of the beſt Grain for themſelves, and the Huſks and Refuſe they ſell to the poor; here is meer Cheating, ſaith God, I will bring a Famine of the Word upon you for this; let none hold in their hands falſe Ballances: I would there did not.

Fourthly, Another ſin that brings a Famine in this Chapter, is Idolatry, *Verſe* 4. *They that Swear by the ſin of Samaria*, and ſay, *Thy God Oh Dan liveth*; here was plain Idolatry;

but let us underſtand this ſin of *Samaria*, what was that? That was the Calf that was ſet up at *Bethel*, near to *Samaria*, and to ſwear to this Calf, here was plain Idolatry; for this God threatned a Famine of the Word; and are we free from this ſin? I would we were: is there no Idol worſhip among us? are there not ſome ſo impudent, as to ſay in Print, It will never be well with us till we are reconciled to the Mother Church of *Rome*: Idolatry it enrageth God, it breaks the Marrriage Knot, it makes God give a Bill of Divorce to a People; Idolatry it does ſo provoke the Lord, that he takes away the Viſible Tokens of his preſence from a Nation: 2 *King.* 17. 12, 18. *They ſerved Idols:* What follows? *Verſe* 18. *Therefore the Lord was very angry with Iſrael, removed them quite out of his ſight:* he unpeopled them, he unchurched them, he removed them out of his ſight. I ſay this to you, when once you ſee dark ſhadows of Popery ſtretched out, then fear the Sun of the Goſpel is going down.

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Fifthly, Another ſin that brings a Goſpel Famine, it is oppoſition to Reformation; when God calls to a Land to return to him by Repentance, *Turn ye, turn ye, why will you die?* but they will go on in ſinne; when God cries to them by his Judgments to break off ſinne, but they will not hear the voice of Gods Rod: *Jer.* 5. *verſe* 3. *They refuſe to receive Correction*; when once it is thus with a people, God will pack up and be gone from them: 7 *Jer.* 13, 14. *ver. Therefore will I do to this Houſe which is called by my Name, as I did to Shilo*; why what did God do to *Shilo?* when he left the tokens of his wrath there at *Shilo*, the Prieſt was ſlain, the Ark taken Priſoner, all the ſigns of Gods preſence were removed, and we never read that the Ark returned to *Shilo* any more. Oh dreadful! hath not the Lord blown the Trumpet in our ears? hath not he called to us to repent, but we hate to be reformed, we turn a deaf ear to God? let *England*, let *London*, take heed it be not with it, as once with *Shilo*, that God does not make the Viſion ceaſe, and bring

a Famine of the word in theſe our dayes, *Levit.* 26. *verſe* 23. pray obſerve, 24. 30. ſaith God, *verſe* 23. *I will puniſh you yet ſeven times more, for your ſinnes, I will make you lie waſt, and I will bring your Sanctuary into deſolation:* that is the firſt thing: if you would prevent a Goſpel Famine, I beſeech you beloved take heed of thoſe ſinnes which you have ſeen have brought a Famine of Gods Word upon a Land.

Secondly, If you would prevent a Famine of the Goſpel, let us beſiege the Throne of Grace by earneſt prayer; Oh pray to God, you that can pray, pray, that the Lord would not depart from you, that he would not make the Viſion ceaſe, that he would not turn the Songs of our Temple into Howling. Oh lay hold upon Chriſt by importunity: you read of thoſe in the Goſpel, when Chriſt made as if he was going away, the Text ſaith, they *did conſtrian him* to ſtay with them, *Luke* 24. *Verſe* 29. Is not the Lord upon the Threſhold of his Temple, as if he was ready to take his wings and

and flye from us? Oh let us by humble Prayer lye at his Feet, and if it be poſſible, conſtrain him yet to ſtay with *England*; Stay Lord, rather any Judgment than this! rather lay a ſtroak upon my Body or Eſtate, but doe not bring a Famine of the Word of God; and if we would prevail with the Lord, uſe Arguments in Prayer when we come to God for the poor Goſpel of *England*: Lord haſt thou never a Remnant left among us, a People that love thee, and fear thee, that hangs about thee, that will not let thee goe? Oh deſtroy not the cluſter, is not there a bleſſing in it? Oh wilt thou be gone from us? art not thou our Father? will the Father take away Bread from his Children? Lord, will not the Enemy inſult to ſee thee leaving thy Temple, where thou haſt put thy Name? wilt thou make the hearts of thy People ſad? and wilt thou rejoyce thine Enemies? Oh Lord, haſt thou not given Bond, and is there better Security? haſt thou not promiſed under thy Hand and Seal, thou wilt give us Paſtors after thine own heart

to ſeed us with Knowledge? Lord, thou wilt never Forfeit thy Bond. It is true, we are an unworthy Nation, not worthy to be Beloved; Oh! but canſt not thou make us fit for Mercy? canſt not thou give us Repentance as well as Deliverance? Nay, Lord, let us further preſs thee, is not thy Honour concerned in all this? we are called by thy Name, leave us not: Thus ſhould we uſe Arguments, and follow God by prayer, and ſurely the Lord will not depart from us. Prayer, it makes a ſweet ſound in Gods Ears, and he will not goe away, where he hears this Muſick. Again,

Thirdly, Would we prevent a Gospel Famine, (which we have cauſe to fear) let us this day turn to God and break off our ſinnes by righteouſneſs: *Jer.* 7. Verſe 3. *Amend your wayes and your doings:* it is a vain thing to pray unleſs you reform, amend your wayes and your doings. What ſhould God continue his Gospel for to an impenitent, ſinfull Land that are reſolved they will ſinne? wh

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Second *Uſe*, of Exhortation, is this, if a Famine of the Word be ſo ſad as you have heard, let us do what we can to keep God ſtill amongſt us, and his Goſpel. You will ſay, how ſhall we keep the Goſpel? it is a bleſſed de-

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ſign to keep the Goſpel? I will name three or four things, and I have done.

Firſt, Entertain the Goſpel into your houſes, that is one way to keep it; *Obadiah*, he entertained the Ark, and his houſe was bleſſed for the Ark ſake; if you cannot have the *Goſpel* in publick, as you uſe to have with purity and freedom, get it into your houſes; I am ſure of this, you can never put your houſes to better uſe, than to entertain Chriſt and his *Goſpel*; I beſeech you let it not be ſaid, that the *Goſpel* is put to ſeek its lodging; does not this *Goſpel* bring Salvation? Oh how glad ſhould you be to have Salvation come to your Houſe.

Secondly, Would you keep the *Goſpel* among you? Improve it the beſt way: I know, ſtill to enjoy the *Goſpel*, is to improve it, lay up a ſtock of knowledge, let the word of Chriſt dwell richly in you, *Coloſ.* 3. *verſ.* 16. Receive the Word not only into your heads, but into your hearts, get good by the word Preached; while the Manna falls gather

gather Manna; the beſt way to enjoy the *Goſpel* is to improve it; *God* will not take away the Breaſt, ſo long as Faith draws the breaſt. And then,

Thirdly, Prize the Goſpel and that is the way to keep it, the Ordinances of God are the moſt ſignal bleſſings, they are better than Gold & Silver, they are the food of your ſouls, they ſtrengthen faith, they increaſe joy; theſe are the Conduits that hold the Water of Life, that ſoul that before was dry like *Aarons* Rod, being planted near theſe waters of the Ordinances, have flouriſhed, have brought forth Buds and Almonds, and therefore prize the Ordinances. Beloved, here we converſe with the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, if ever we enjoy Chriſt upon earth, it is here; if ever we ſee his Face, it is through this Lattice; Gods Ordinances are like the place of the Mercy Seat, where the Lord did ſpeak from heaven to his people; Oh then prize theſe Goſpel bleſſings, and that is the way yet to keep them among you.

And laſtly, If you would keep the Goſpel with you, adorn the Goſpel; you that are

are here preſent, you do all profeſs the Goſpel, that is not enough, unleſs you adorn the Goſpel, *Phil.* 1. 27. *Let your Converſation be as becomes the Goſpel*; but when do we adorn the Goſpel? I anſwer, when we live according to the rule of the Goſpel in ſobriety and ſanctity, Oh that is to adorn it: when we walk according to the rule of it in ſobriety and ſanctity: we adorn the Goſpel, when we walk as the Members of Chriſt, and as thoſe that are acted by his Spirit, we adorn the Goſpel; when we ſhine forth in in a kind of Angelical brightneſs, and live ſo holy as if we had ſeen the Lord, this is to adorn the Goſpel: and this is the beſt way I know to have the Goſpel entailed upon us, and upon our Poſterity after us.

FINIS.